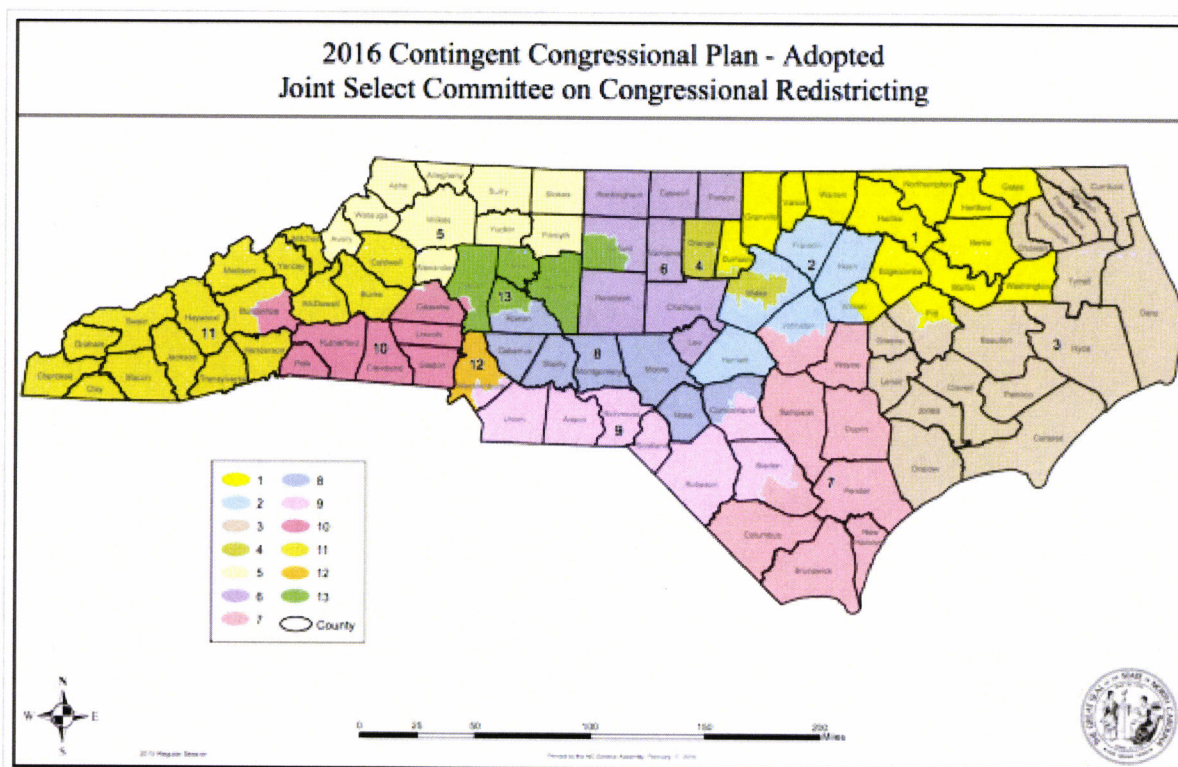




Districts Democrats could win

February 22, 2016 | by Thomas Mills | Editor's Blog, redistricting | 6 Comments



The
past
week
has

reinforced the need for an independent redistricting commission in the state. If the disruption to our elections for the third decade in a row was not enough, Republicans' arrogance and cavalier approach toward the process is. The GOP clearly put their interests ahead of those of the voters, moving entire districts across the state and admittedly rigging the system for their benefit by insisting on maintaining a 10-3 Republican advantage. After three decades of this nonsense, clearly neither party has the discipline to put the people's interests above their own.

That said, the districts they drew look better than any we've seen in decades. They are more compact and split fewer counties and precincts. Keeping communities together is positive. And the districts are more competitive, even if only slightly so.

In North Carolina, African-Americans make up 22% of the registered voters. Historically, districts where minorities made up 20% or more of the registered voters were considered competitive. At some point, that changed. Or at least the perception of competitive districts changed.

Of the districts that the Republicans drew, African-Americans make up at least 20% of registered voters in eight of them. In both the 8th and 9th Congressional Districts, African-Americans and Native Americans combine to make up 25% of the registered voters. In 2008, admittedly the best year Democrats have had in the last few decades, **Hagan won the 8th and 13th districts**. In the 9th, which Hagan barely lost, **Democrats hold a 13-point advantage over Republicans**.

Two things seem to be happening. First, Republicans said that they were keeping the district split 10-3 in their favor and everybody believes them. Controlling the message discourages competent candidates from jumping into races that might be competitive. We won't actually know if they're 10-3 districts until we vote in them.

Second, Democrats need to learn how to talk to working class and suburban white voters. In both the 8th and 9th Districts, Democrats only need 35% of white voters to win. If they can't win in districts like that in a good Democratic year, or even a neutral year, they've got bigger problems than just the district lines.

There's no doubt that all but three of the districts are tough for Democrats. There's also no doubt in my mind that Democrats could win a handful of these districts under the right circumstances. However, the party needs to become a bigger tent again and quit demanding litmus tests. Candidates matter and the right candidates in the right year could give Democrats seats that they don't have. It's better to fight for seats now rather than wait for demographics to shift or the elusive redistricting committee.

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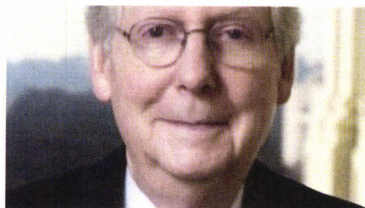


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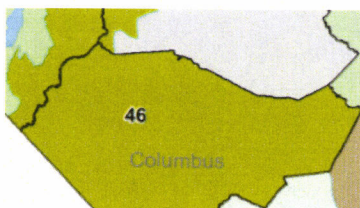
Thomas Mills is the founder and publisher of PoliticsNC.com. Before beginning PoliticsNC, Thomas spent twenty years as a political and public affairs consultant. [Learn more >](#)



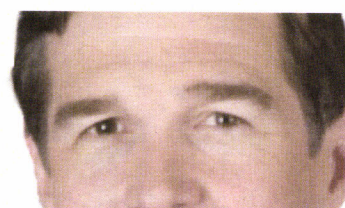
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